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ABSTRACT

A field-based master's degree program offered by a small private university is sequenced so that students may complete course requirements identical to those offered on campus. The program at the University of Portland (Oregon) offers selected courses at key locations not more than 50 miles from campus and is staffed by university faculty. This radius allows for ease in on-site visitation by the graduate school, advisement of students, and monitoring of the program. Participating faculty, teaching the same course on-campus as well as off, are able to carry a full-time faculty load. The program was developed through collaboration between the university and school district curriculum directors, with input from potential graduate students. It is a requirement that all graduate students take classes on campus for at least one semester; this can be during a summer session. Cooperation between the school of education and the school districts provides assistance to the students in paying tuition. A needs assessment questionnaire used in developing appropriate programs in the school districts is included. (JD)

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"DEVELOPING QUALITY INSERVICE OFFERINGS: A CONTEXT BASED PROGRAM AT A SMALL UNIVERSITY

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"Developing Quality Inservice Offerings: A Context Based Program at a Small University"

This paper describes the efforts of a small, private Pacific Northwest university to develop a field based masters degree program. The program is unusual in that it is sequenced so that students may virtually complete all the course requirements at aff campus locations. All field courses are identical to those offered on campus. Special components of the field based program include planning, advising, and procedures allowing for deferred tuition payment.

Background Information

The University of Portland is a small, private university overlooking the Willamette River in Portland, Oregon. The university has an enrollment of approximately 2800 undergraduates and 600 graduate students. The School of Education has an enrollment of 150 undergraduates and 350 graduate students. Of the 350 graduate students, approximately one-third are primarily served at off campus locations.

The school employs twelve (12) full-time and twenty-one (21) part-time faculty. Faculty are divided into four departments. Majors are offered in over fifteen (15) secondary areas plus elementary, early childhood, special, and religious education. Additional programs include Counseling/ Psychology and arts administration.

Prior to 1980 the inservice program at the University of Portland was one of providing both professional development and degree programs indiscriminantly at off-campus locations - the sole criteria for offering a course was the school districts desire for a course, workshop or degree program. Off campus

instruction was typified by a heavy reliance on high school staff to conduct the professional courses. What was gained in amount of credit hours generated was often lost in quality of course work and instruction. Beginning in 1979, with the advent of a new administration in the School of Education, a complete review and assessment of the inservice program and resources was conducted. The school realized it was limited as to adequate resources and staff. The failure to develop a quality program would discredit all education programs at the university. The new off-campus plan called for offering a few courses at key off-campus locations serving primarily rural students. The locations were selected on the basis of areas:

1. not being served by other schools
2. within service range that would allow moving of university library resources to the off-campus location.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was contacted regarding the entire concept of continuing education, especially the proper conduct of off-campus programs.

In reviewing the resources of the School of Education in 1979, it was determined that a major revision in its inservice education would have to be undertaken. Inservice education would now apply to all education taking place after the individual possessed the first degree and/or certificate. It was further decided that the school would need to seriously limit its offerings and to focus its offerings where its limited resources could best be used. It was recognized that such a decision would, at least initially, reduce the number of student credit hours generated through inservice programs.

Service Area

After taking into consideration the number of faculty and their teaching load on campus, it was agreed that the market we could serve best was those school districts within a range of 50 miles. Included in this consideration was the recognition that faculty could instruct a class at such a location and still return home that same evening. This arrangement allows for quality instruction time rather than trying to crowd material into a limited time block. This 50 mile radius model further allowed for ease in on-site visitation by the Graduate School, advisement of students, and monitoring of program.

Implied in this service area was a recognition that university faculty or university approved faculty with Ph.D.'s would be the primary teaching personnel for all inservice programs. Prior to 1979, courses had been offered off-campus indiscriminately with little coordination between the locations being served or the on-campus schedule. Before 1979 the selection of courses off-campus were mainly chosen after a district had contacted the university and made such a request. There was a high reliance on school district staff rather than regular university faculty as instructors. In short the quality of the program was highly suspect.

Programs

Rather than attempting to compete with or duplicate services offered by other universities the school determined that the best avenue for inservice education was to provide primarily fifth year or graduate program offerings. This meant the reduction of some superfluous but high interest courses that were primarily for professional development. The school also reduced the number of course options in the graduate programs. Present inservice offerings focus on core masters courses that can be used for all of the masters degree options. These courses have the same content, the same

numbering system, title, and instructors as those courses taught on campus. The result of such offerings were:

1) The off-campus course would be identical in all respects to those taught on-campus.

2) the off-campus course would count for faculty load and the school would receive identical credit towards FTE enrollment.

The model at this stage did not completely answer the needs of the local school systems. Occasionally districts need a special course on a one time only or on a limited repeat basis. After consultation with NCATE, it was decided that these courses are acceptable for graduate credit; however, they must meet the same qualitative standards as the regular masters courses. These special one time or limited courses are given special numbers signifying that they were workshops or special seminars. This addition to the model allowed the university to tailor some instructional course work to the special needs of school teachers in a specific district.

Staffing

By successfully having the university count off-campus program that was identical to that offered on-campus, the school was able to count such courses as appropriate for full-time faculty load. This meant that such courses could count towards FTE. A faculty member could, then, teach the same course (preparation) on-campus as well as off and have both count towards load. Such a plan reduced the number of teaching preparations while increasing the frequency of highly desirable off-campus courses. The incorporation of university faculty as the mainstay of the inservice program enabled the School of Education to eliminate the reliance on high school teachers or part-time faculty as primary instructors in the inservice program. Such an approach had an unforeseen benefit. Evaluation of program and teacher effectiveness was enhanced under such a model.

OFF-CAMPUS ADVISING

Prior to 1979, off campus student files were non-existent or meager. School policy dictated that files were started only once the student had taken a course on the main campus. Frequently, students assumed requirements for a degree had been completed only to discover that they were lacking certain courses or number of hours becasue of a lack of advising in off-campus program. A need clearly existed for off-campus program planning and advising. Students needed to know what their required courses were and also when those courses will be offered in their district. Furthermore, students needed input into course selection, and when those courses would be offered. These services were built into the new model.

Process for Developing A Collaborative Plan

School districts expressing an interest in our type program were contacted regarding particulars. The normal procedure for discussing the possibilities and realities of what the university could offer was done, most typically, with the curriculum director. The curriculum director usually has a good knowledge of the academic conditions within their district. The directors also know the number of teachers who would be interested in pursuing graduate degrees and the facilities available to the university for instruction.

After the discussion with the curriculum director, the School of Education's off-campus coordinator has an idea whether it is realistic to pursue off-campus courses based upon the information provided. Occasionally it is discovered that another university is already in the area and adequately providing services. More often the rule is that certain skills or courses have not been addressed, or that the courses presently offered are extremely theory oriented not taking into consideration the pecularities unique to each district. Most often the complaints were lack of advisement, and courses

offered off-campus by the other colleges could not transfer to any on-campus graduate program.

Usually when another university is already offering coursework in an area, our program attempts to fill in the gaps, rather than compete or offer duplicate services. Following the meetings with the curriculum director, questionnaires (Figure 1) were sent to all teachers assessing the courses needed, the preferred arrangement of courses (such as the number of hours in the evening, weekend classes or combination or the two) and the frequency of course offerings. (Figure 2 exhibits the first stages of contact and interaction and Figure 3 illustrates the continuing stages of interaction).

By working closely with strategic personnel within each district, certain areas that needed additional development could be diagnosed quickly. To assess the level of interest for graduate study after the questionnaire was evaluated by the teachers, a short, high interest workshop would be developed and advertised. From the enrollment in that workshop the masters nucleus would be formed.

Being a small college, we recognize that to have a solid program you need a firm base; this is what we call our nucleus or critical mass. Our nucleus consists of a group of about 10 teachers who are enthusiastic about obtaining a degree and recognize the advantages of having a university come to their area. Usually these teachers are also dedicated to their career and looking towards advancement.

A critical mass of enthusiastic teachers is a godsend to curriculum directors as they relieve much of the workload because they advertise, by word of mouth, the advantages of having a locally based graduate program. Eventually additional permanent members are added to the nucleus. As long as these teachers continue and the program gets the occassional drop-in who hasn't made a decision about being in a graduate program the courses can be cost effective to a university.

At the beginning of each course, the off-campus coordinator goes with the instructor to register the teachers, collect the tuition and to answer questions. During this time, the teachers are informally assessed as to which graduate courses they would like to see offered and any other recommendations they might have regarding the program.

Normally, after the questionnaire and the first workshop is over, a tentative three year plan for the district is established. This is tentative, but planned on a cyclincal basis so as to compliment courses at other off-campus locations and those offered on-campus. This is a real advantage for teachers who like to plan their program and complete in as short a period of time as possible their masters degree and permanent or standard teaching certificate.

Some Additional Facts

1. Several of our off-campus locations are within 25 miles of each other, so a number of teachers can take advantage of this opportunity to travel to a nearby district for classes.
2. It is a requirement that all graduate students take classes at least one semester on campus. This can be a summer session.
3. A unique arrangement that the School of Education has implemented is to assist teachers in paying their tuition. Since many teachers in

Figure 1

UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

PLEASE COMPLETE

This questionnaire has been designed to more efficiently plan a graduate program for standard certification and masters degree in education in the Gresham School District. Please take the time to respond and return to ROSE LOWES. Thank you!!

NAME_____

ADDRESS:_____
Street Apt City State Zip

SCHOOL:_____

HOME PHONE:_____ WORK PHONE:_____

1. Do you have a master's degree? (circle one) yes no

2. Do you have a standard certificate? (circle one) yes no

3. Are you currently in a program at another university? (circle one) yes no

4. Name of the university?

5. Are you in the Graduate School at the University of Portland? (circle one) yes no

6. If so, which of the following programs apply to you? (circle one)

   a. Master of Education with Elementary Standard Certification
   b. Master of Education with Secondary Standard Certification
   c. Master of Education General Program
   d. Master of Arts

7. How many hours do you have to complete your program?

8. What are the <u>required</u> courses you have left? (Circle ones applicable)

   a. Guidance and Counseling
   b. Research Techniques
   c. Curriculum Development
   d. Exceptional Child
   e. Diagnosis and Remedial Reading
   f. Other_____

9. What areas in education are you interested in? (Circle one)

   a. Reading
   b. Supervision
   c. Early Childhood
   d. Special Education

Page Two of Questionnaire

10. Are you taking Research Techniques on Thursday nights, Fall Semester in Gresham? (circle one) yes no

11. What courses would you like to see offered in Gresham in the Spring? (put 1-5 according to preference; 1 for first choice, 2 for 2nd choice....)

___ Reading in the Content Area
___ Managing Classroom Behavior
___ Elements of Reading
___ Guidance and Counseling
___ Language Development and Disabilities
___ Diagnosis, Prescription, and Evaluative Techniques

12. What are the best times for you? (Indicate preference by putting the appropriate number in the box)

1 - Prefer this format over the others
2 - Would be willing to try this format occassionally
3 - Prefer this format best of all

☐ 12 weeknight sessions from 4:00-6:45

☐ 12 weeknight sessions from 7:00-9:45

☐ 6 weeknight sessions from 4:00-9:45
(Possibly two weeks on and one week off)

☐ 3 weekends (Fri/Sat) with one to two weeks seperating each weekend

COMMENT:

13. Would you like information sent to you on the graduate program in education at the University of Portland. (Circle one) yes no

SUGGESTIONS, COMPLAINTS:

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire or about the University of Portland, contact Stephanie Hyde at 283-7135.

Fig. 2

FIRST STAGE OF INTERACTION

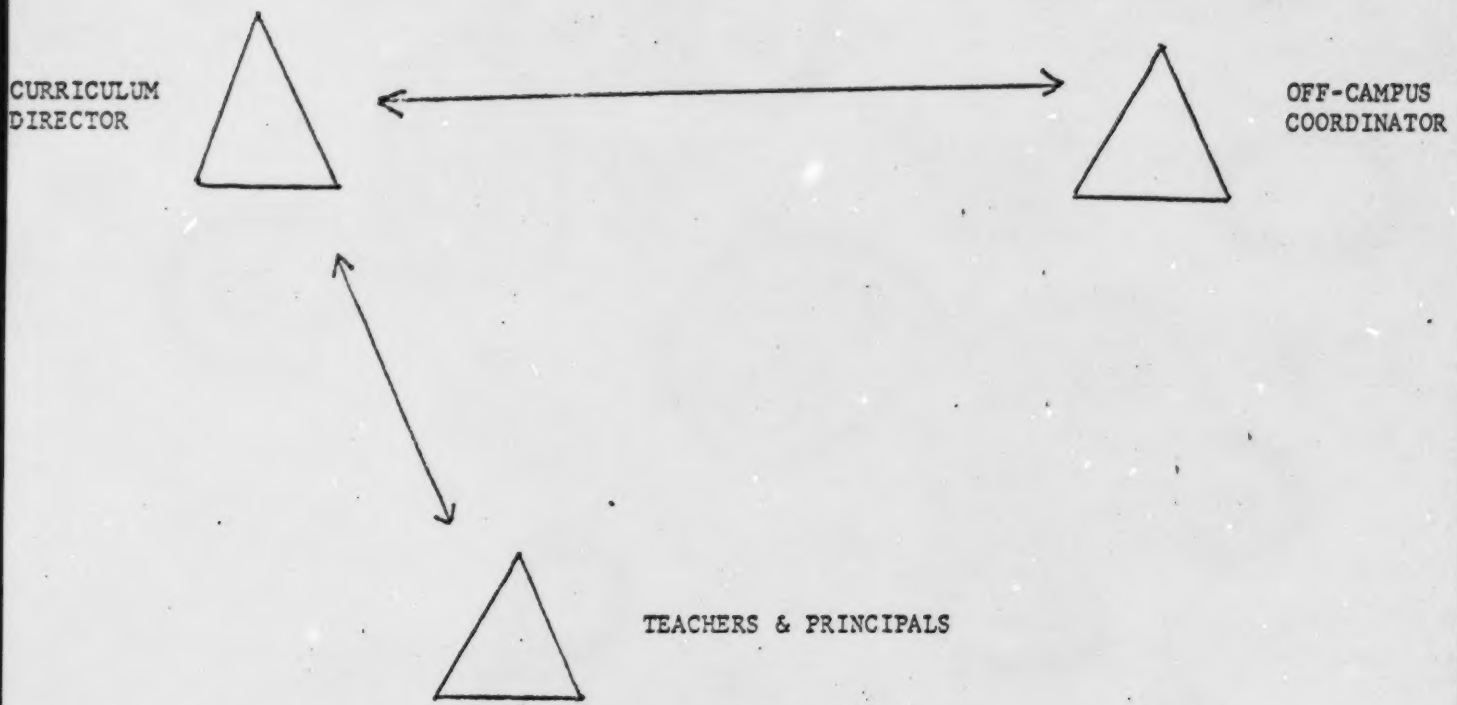
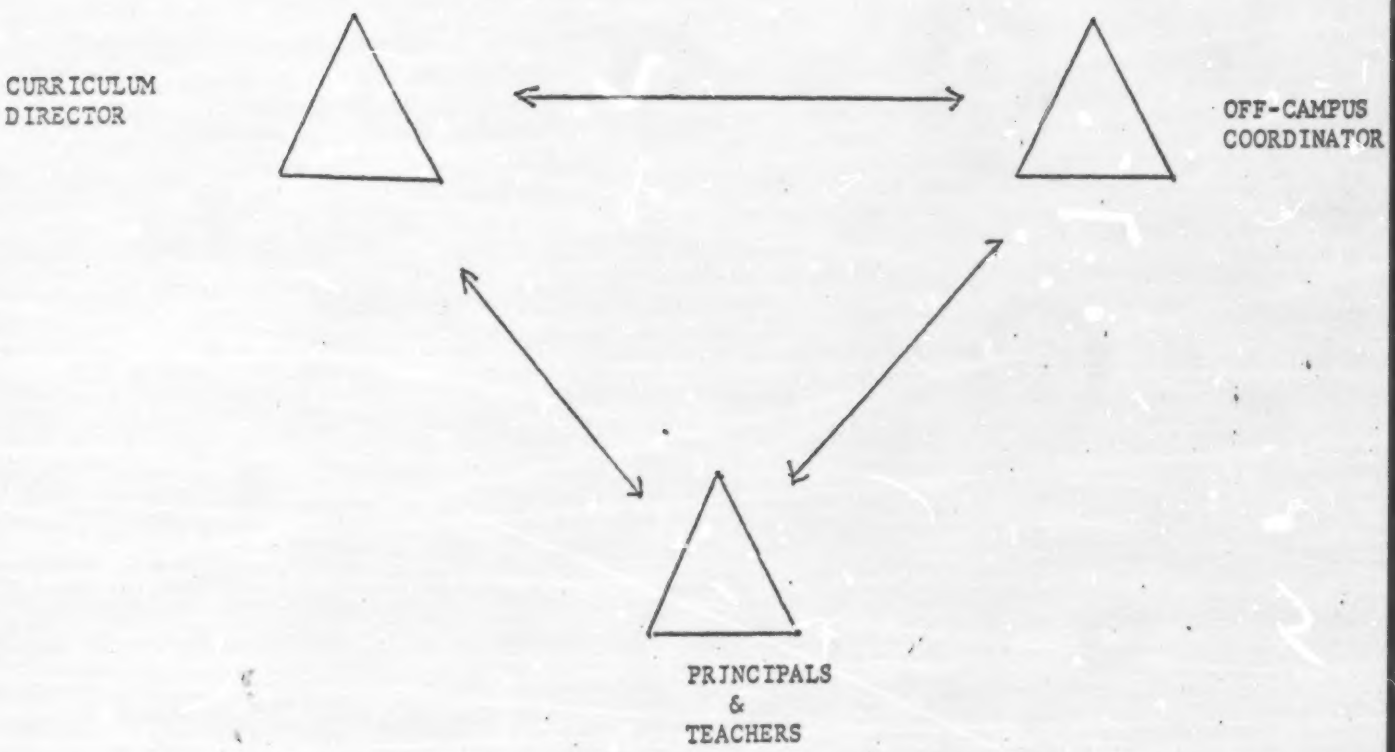


Figure 3

CONTINUING STAGE OF INTERACTION



Oregon have been hit hard by the economic decline, the school bills the district directly. Most teachers have reimbursement through the district, and this saves the teacher the problem of initial tuition payment before reimbursal. Occasionally we run into a stumbling block with this billing procedure as some districts absolutely refuse to pay until proof is shown that the teacher has successfully completed the course. In districts where this has been a problem, we have instituted a loan service for a five dollar fee which allows the teacher to pay two-thirds of the cost the first night of the course (post dating the check to the end of the month to better match their pay period) and one-third pay scheduled mid-way through the course, again on a date to match their pay period.

Benefit of the Redesign Inservice Program to the School of Education

Speaking selfishly, the new inservice program provides numerous benefits to the School of Education and its faculty, such as:

1. Reduction of preparations - A faculty member may teach the same course on-campus and off-campus thus reducing the number of preparations which are unavoidably large at a small school.
2. The program is consistent - whether taken on-campus or off-campus, with the same caliber of student.
3. Allows on-campus students to go off-campus for a course if there is a scheduling conflict
4. A quality program attracts new students - especially when they know they can take the vast majority of course work in their own district.
5. An inservice program identical to the on-campus program tends to engender university faculty involvement as compared to other forms of inservice.
6. Allows for members to get out of the "ivory tower" and work in a real field situation using relevant practical techniques to solve problems.
7. Allows the school to count FTE from off-campus courses.
8. Permits consistent evaluation of all program and teaching effectiveness.

Benefits to Students

To field based masters level students, the benefits are:

1. On site advisement and program planning-students can be sure their program is fully certifiable and endorsable by state and national agencies.

2. Sequentially organized offerings - duplication and unnecessary courses to the required "core" are identified to maximize class scheduling.

3. Courses are identical to on campus offerings in title and course numbers - while content is practical and methods related, the syllabus covers the same content.

4. Teachers take classes with colleagues in their district, allowing collabrative assignments and access to children for practicums.

5. Saves money for the student since they are given a tuition break for off-campus courses.

6. Travel time is greatly lessened since course work is in their district.

7. On-site registration eases the travel and time burden associated with program registration on-campus.

8. The off-campus program is identical as that offered on campus and courses can be included in a graduate program.

9. The tuition plan allows teachers to enroll for courses despite immediate financial conditions.

Benefit to School District

To a school district seeking the benefit of additional programs for it's teachers, the inservice program provides the following advantages:

1. The school district has input into the decision making concerning the context and offering of program.

2. The obvious benefit for the school district is better educated teachers for classroom instruction.

3. Program instruction by regular faculty.

4. A three year planned program which is flexible and enhance students progress through the course work.

5. The school district will realize a "cost break" for tuition since they are providing many of the facilities for instruction.

6. The delivery of a quality comprehensive graduate program to a district

In summary, the first task for the University of Portland School of Education was to assess its resources and capabilities, clearly review past programs and mission and redefine the mission in terms of the resources available as to bring the school into full compliance with the state and national accreditation standards and, by doing so, create a climate of quality for all offered programs. In a sense, the university was matching its resources and positioning itself into an advantageous situation within that market. It meant eliminating or reducing many offerings; it meant focusing on regular course program; it meant using regular university faculty; and it meant working toward the elimination of difference between on and off campus program. It also meant turning over to other institutions services that can be more realistically provided by them.